

Targeted Brownfield Assessment Proposed Community Health Center White City, Oregon

Project Overview

In May 2003, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) completed a Targeted Brownfield Assessment (TBA) at the 1-acre former Camp White (military) Motor Park in White City, with funding from EPA Region 10. The purpose of the TBA was to find out whether significant contamination remained from vehicle-repair activities during the 1940s. Jackson County and the nonprofit Community Health Center (CHC) wish to build a new community-health facility at this site. There is a significant need for this facility, as this part of the county is underserved. The Oregon Economic & Community Development Dept. had approved a \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant for this project, conditioned upon DEQ's making a *No-Further-Action* decision. Additionally, the site owner, a private trust, had pledged to donate the property to the CHC upon a DEQ No-Further-Action decision.

Site Background

The site is located on a part of the former Camp White military facility, constructed by the U.S. Army for the 91st Infantry Div. in 1941. The site was part of Camp White Motor Park, which included a service shop and a garage. After WW2, the U.S. declared the property "surplus," and sold a 6-acre portion to a private buyer (the subject site is part of this larger lot). Between 1999 and 2001, the owner commissioned a phased environmental assessment of the property, which resulted in the discovery of soil contamination in a sump in the former shop building. The owner's consultant excavated this contaminated soil and treated it on-site using aeration. Groundwater samples taken from this area were not contaminated.



At the owner's request, DEQ reviewed this work in 2002. Partly due to incomplete documentation of the 1999-2001 activities, DEQ concluded that additional investigation would be necessary before the agency could consider a No-Further-Action decision. DEQ called for

further soil sampling in the former motor park's sump, floor drains, and concrete vaults, and around the footprint of the proposed CHC building. While the previous work indicated that groundwater was not contaminated, DEQ requested further assessment of groundwater to verify this conclusion. Contaminants of potential concern were gasoline, diesel, and related petroleum/oil compounds, as well as metals. Because the owner already had spent a substantial sum on site investigation and cleanup, he was unable to fund the additional work that DEQ had specified, and therefore agreed to collaborate with Jackson County and CHC in applying for a TBA.

What We Did

In January 2003 DEQ prepared, and EPA approved, a work plan for field sampling. DEQ then mobilized to the site, collecting seven soil and four groundwater samples from areas of concern. DEQ also conducted a geophysical survey of metal objects to a depth of 12 ft., in response to anecdotal evidence suggesting that buried drums or underground tanks might be present at the site.

What We Found

In soil, only arsenic was detected above applicable screening values; there were no other contaminants detected above levels of concern. DEQ attributed arsenic to naturally occurring concentrations in local soils, rather than to past operating practices. Groundwater contained no petroleum compounds or solvents, but did contain arsenic, chromium, and lead at levels of potential concern. DEQ concluded that the chromium was present in the less-toxic *trivalent* state (screening levels are based on the far more toxic *hexavalent* form). Furthermore, elevated metal levels in groundwater were due to high background concentrations in soil and to the fact that DEQ had not filtered water samples in the field to remove very fine sediments. DEQ also found that nearby residents would be unlikely to use shallow groundwater because: 1) the shallow aquifer is unsuitable for volume well-water production; 2) there are in fact no wells at or near the site; and 3) the CHC building will be hooked up to the municipal water supply. Finally, DEQ's geophysical survey showed no evidence of buried metallic objects.

The Next Steps

DEQ concluded that the 2001 soil removal had adequately addressed the only known area of petroleum/waste oil contamination, and that metals found in other parts of the site did not result from past automotive operations. Based on these conclusions, and following a 30-day public-comment period, DEQ made a No-Further-Action determination for the site. This will permit the private trust to donate the property, without liability, to the CHC, and in turn will allow the CHC to access the \$600,000 block grant to begin building the badly needed White City Community Health Center. The TBA -- and the cooperative partnership between a county, a nonprofit organization, and a private trust -- have sown the seeds for a brownfield success story in Oregon.

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